

Summary Report Atlantic Marine Seminar in Galway 24/25 March 2009

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On the 24th and 25th March 2009 Sean O'Donoghue attended the Atlantic Marine Seminar held in Galway, Ireland, on behalf of the Pelagic RAC. The seminar was chaired by DG Environment and involved relevant Member States, Commission officials, ETC (European Topic Centre on Biological Diversity), ICES, NGOs and four RACs.

The purpose of the seminar was to examine the designation of SCIs (Sites of Community Importance) by the ten Member States involved in the Marine Atlantic region (North Sea, Western Waters and Iberian peninsula) put forward under the Habitats Directive 92/43/EEC. In particular it assessed if the proposed SCIs submitted by the ten Member States were sufficient for each relevant Annex I habitat type and for each Annex II species of 92/43/EEC.

The Marine Atlantic Region is a very large area of approximately 2,338,000 km² representing approximately 37% of EU marine waters and 54% of the EU terrestrial. Ireland and UK combined account for approximately 56% of the maritime area with Portugal, Spain and France combined approximately 36%. The total number of sites submitted by the ten Member States were 321 in total with an approx. area of 64,300 km².

The working method adopted for the seminar was to assess relevant habitats and species for each Member State individually. The habitats assessed were sandbanks, reefs, submarine structures made by leaking gasses and submerged or partially submerged sea caves. The species assessed were *Petromyzon marinus*, *Lampetra fluviatilis*, *Acipenser sturio*, *Alosa alosa*, *Alosa fallax*, *Coregonus oxyrinchus*, *Caretta caretta*, *Chelonia mydas*, *Tursiopus truncatus*, *Phocoena phocoena*, *Halichoerus grypus*, and *Phoca vitulina*.

Conclusion were made per habitat and species for each Member State using the following headings:

SUF	Sufficient. No more sites required.
IN MIN	Insufficient minor. No more sites required providing habitat/species is noted in existing sites (already proposed for other features).
IN MOD	Insufficient moderate. Current number and/or distribution of sites is insufficient: additional sites need to be proposed or existing sites need to be enlarged.
IN MAJOR	Insufficient major. No sites proposed: sites need to be proposed.
SCIENTIFIC RESERVE	A definite conclusion is not possible: need to investigate/clarify a scientific issue –interpretation of habitat, controversial presence of species, etc. This does not mean that we need a 3-year research project to sort out the reserve.
G	Geographical insufficiency. Used to qualify an IN MOD. Indicates that the insufficiency is mainly linked to the bad geographical coverage of proposed sites—e.g. more sites needed in north-east.
CD	Correction of data. Not linked to sufficiency. Normally used together with other conclusions to Indicate data problems – e.g. evaluations incomplete, sites wrongly proposed

It is worth noting that the Commission made it very clear at the beginning of the seminar that it would not be dealing with management measures associated with these SCIs. This is obviously a key issue for the Pelagic RAC for the future.